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ABSTRACT

The Indian-Metis project to develop a multi-media kit of social studies curriculum materials is based upon an integrated anthropological framework. All kinds of materials and theoretical positions are brought together and bear upon the education of children in the age range of eleven to thirteen. This project, amid negative reactions of teachers to the development of yet another study kit on Indians, offers a teaching approach which gives the affective domain of learning an equal role with the cognitive domain. Designed to lead children into investigating native cultures of Western Canada through materials relating to history, geography, archaeology, language, arts and crafts, music, food, economics and mathematics, this program has as its goal the development of cultural sensitivity. A related document is ED 055 016. (SHM)

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DESIGNING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE CURRICULUM MATERIALS FOR CANADIAN SCHOOLS

INDIAN-MÉTIS

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When the proposal to develop a multi-media kit of curriculum materials for children was approved by Project Canada West everyone assumed that our team was going to develop materials which might be used in the standard type of history class.

We had no such intention and we used, as our starting point for thinking about possible materials, the definition of anthropology as given by Harris:

> "Anthropology, as the word's Greek roots indicate, is the study of man, as animate physical being, creature of evolution and genetic code; as the language-using culture animal, profusely endowed with manufactures, beliefs and life styles; in all habitats and settlements, familiar as well as exotic, past, present and future."

Having accepted this definition as a starting point we moved, rightly or wrongly, one further stage and rejected anthropology as a distinct discipline to be used but rather considered it as an integrative framework in which all kinds of materials and theoretical positions could be brought together and brought to bear upon the education of children in the age range of eleven to thirteen.

Our project is called the Indian-Métis project and merits this term as it uses Indian and Métis people as its major content area.

We chose this area for several reasons:

1. The desire to foster the use of materials pertaining to Native peoples in the schools in order to give white children a better understanding of Indian and Métis.
2. The desire to develop materials which would be highly relevant if used in schools containing a majority or

a substantial minority of Indian or Métis children.

3. The desire to expose the elementary teachers to a method of curriculum development which allows the social sciences of anthropology and sociology to integrate with history and geography to allow man to be studied as an holistic being rather than in the fragmented fashion that has become so common in our schools.

These desires reinforced our first decision - that of using anthropology as the integrative framework into which we could bring various materials and theoretical positions.

Teacher reaction to our proposal was one of caution. In the last decade the market has been flooded with materials concerning Indian Peoples - films, filmstrips, pictures and books. Most of these relate to Indians of times past and are of a basically romantic nature which white children will accept in small quantities but to which modern Indian and Métis children find great difficulty in relating. Teachers themselves are often at a loss as to how to use the materials as they tend to be fragmentary in nature and rarely can be put together into a sequence which can be effectively used in a classroom.

Teachers raised the question, "Why another study kit about Métis and Indians? There should be no need as every elementary child studies "Indians" at several grade levels". But what do they learn? They learn certain exotic things about Indians - Indians as they were many years ago. At a minimum they learn that all Indians lived in teepees; wore buckskins, used bows and arrows, and fought and scalped white settlers.

The results of such studies are to be seen in society; adults who have stereotyped and often false ideas of what Indians are like; adults who have never thought of the differences between Indians and Métis. At the worst we see adults who intellectually know things but cannot emotionally integrate them.

A state, by the way, which Stokey Carmichael suggests may be one of the basic causes for the continuing racism he believes can be perceived amongst University personnel in North America.

Our program attempts to offer teachers another approach to studying Native Canadians. An approach which gives the affective domain of learning an equal role with the cognitive domain. Many people are convinced that a greater stress on the affective domain in learning, commonly called confluent education, offers a hope for eradicating prejudice and discrimination from our society.

As a team we were aware of the negative bias which has been so evident in much of the popular literature and in school textbooks. Indeed, some Indian and Métis people have contended that the academic failure of the children in school can be traced to racist attitudes of teachers and the general Canadian public.

As a team, composed of an Indian, a Métis and two white teachers, we entered into a study of what educators were doing as a result of charges of racism.

We found that educators have responded to the documentation of racial bias and academic failure by furious activity in the field of curriculum. Teachers in primary grades have everyone build teepees; intermediate grades have a "unit" on Indians and Métis; high school teachers enthusiastically tackle the education of Indian students who have been wrenched from remote communities, thrust into boarding homes and "integrated" into urban school systems. Despite these sincere efforts, which are reminiscent of missionary activity, the situation has improved little as evidenced by a study of graduation rates from high school. The masses of Native peoples, encouraged to enter the urban slums, drift aimlessly and fill the emptiness in their

lives with alcohol and drugs. While the suicide rate of Natives increases dramatically, community social tensions increase and the children of Canada's newest urban immigrants fail to respond to the exhortations and inducements of their teachers to work hard and gain entrance to the good life.

The negative bias of curriculum has been replaced by an equally insidious evil; that of the positive bias towards Native peoples. In a superficial manner the schools inform the children of all the wonderful Natives until the student is conditioned to think of them as the most noble people on earth. Overnight the Native peoples have been changed from "bad" guys to "good" guys. Their contributions to world civilizations, although considerable, are over-emphasized. A danger is that a positive bias to overcome an immediate problem may not produce the desired long range attitudinal changes. Attempts at objectivity, with a stress on Natives being endowed with the strengths and weaknesses common to all humanity, seem to hold out more hope for smashing stereotypes than romanticizing the past. This romanticization of the past has been aided and abetted by the Native organizations who have been seduced by the mass media into attracting public attention by emphasizing what they didn't want and only lately have they been concentrating on the more mundane task of detailing what they do want.

The superficiality of discussing beads, buckskin and native dancing will not suffice to hide the underlying principle upon which public school education in Canada is based. That is, there is a core of values which every person in Canada should adhere to and it is the role of the school to inculcate these values in its student body. The following three values form the core.

The student's behavior must be made comprehensible and predictable in most situations. He must have faith in science which is the handmaiden of progress. His values must approximate the norm in terms of work and play.

If any group fails to exhibit these tenets of faith it will be rejected

and designated with a distinctive and negative label. Despite public protestations to the contrary the group will become the Canadian equivalent of an untouchable caste. If this caste can be identified by distinguishable physical traits, individuals who do not acculturate to white society will have difficulty in being accepted except as tokens of racial equality.

No syllabus, no curriculum guide, no teacher's manual will solve the problem which Native peoples and white Canadians have created for themselves. It will be partially solved when educators examine,understand and accept two opposing sets of realities: Native realities and white realities. The multidimensions of these realities must be understood by teachers, and indeed, form the bases upon which the developers of curricula must build.

Although Indian tribes and Métis communities pride themselves upon their uniqueness, there are similarities that can be subsumed under broad headings. Such broad groupings allow us to examine the realities teachers encounter and which generally confuse them.

In European culture man has, through the ages, slowly developed a structured way of thinking about reality and a separate branch of philosophy is devoted to it. In a cross-cultural situation white teachers naturally consider people and things from this European view. Native peoples, being of a different culture, define reality in a slightly different way. Reality, to a Native, is what an individual thinks is real. Thus, if a Native person believes something, that is reality for him. This holds true even if the reality is proven by European logic to be an illusion. Harold Cardinal's book, The Unjust Society, is an excellent example of this method of defining reality. The same basic problem, discussed by William Wuttunee in his book Ruffled Feathers is an example of classical European reasoning which develops an entirely different reality. Although white Canadians may admire and agree with Wuttunee, ~~an~~ a acculturated Cree, there can be no doubt that Cardinal reflects the thinking of most Native persons in Canada. To be more specific, what is it

that creates the Native realities and develops a mental set which exasperates white Canadians?

Indian and Métis differ in geographical placement. These areas are unique in environmental aspects but have a sameness about them. Whether the area be the formal demarcation of a reserve or the psychological boundaries of a Métis community, the result is the same. The way in which Native persons perceive themselves is directly related to the subtle and sophisticated apartheid policies practised in Canada. Groups of people cannot be separated physically, economically, socially and psychologically from the dominant society without developing radically different perceptions of themselves and the oppressing society. It does not follow, therefore, that all Native persons wish to change the apartheid system. Although the system is frustrating it is also a guarantee of cultural perseverance. The reality of apartheid, no matter how distasteful, is an important factor which cannot be ignored by the developer of curricula.

Indians and Métis have a different view of history. They see history as the propaganda of the victor and would agree with Vogel's statement

> "To draw the curtain over unpleasant happenings in history is not less to be deplored than conscious falsification."[1]

Sealey[2] and Howard[3] have detailed the habit of viewing of history as a function of white society. If a teacher is faced with a class that rejects, albeit passively, most of what is said in history class as a pack of lies, this then becomes a matter of serious concern in terms of curriculum development. Damning the Native view as narrow, parochial or simply as outright stupidity doesn't solve the problem. Everyone staying on square one doesn't help the game to progress with any degree of speed.

Native persons are racially different. Through marriage and miscegenation the Indian traits are non-existent or blurred in many, but it is relatively easy for people to identify most Native persons by their physical traits. The high degree of visibility allows the full force of stereotypic thinking of

the dominant society to be directed against Natives. It thus becomes hard for them to become individuals per se for society identifies the individual as one of the group and, to a large extent, praises or damns him as it perceives the group. Despite the extreme sensitivity that usually develops amongst persons with a high degree of visibility, it is still common to hear teachers say, "I treat them just like the white student." What an insult to the complex psychological turmoil which exists in the minds of most Native students! It reflects also the lack of knowledge, which is characteristic of so many teachers, of the class system in Canada. To the student at the bottom of the social pyramid, the pollyanna attitude of teachers, which is firmly rooted in the mythology of social equality and justice must appear as a weird thing indeed. For the student, although he may not be able to articulate it, intuitively knows the social inequality and injustice which permeates society and feels hopelessly oppressed by it. Such intuitive knowledge tends to develop either into apathy or rebellion in people of this historical period.

The reality of visibility, reinforced by other realities, explains why the assimilation of Native peoples has been largely a failure. Despite extensive acculturation toward the material things of the dominant society, a majority of Native persons still feel, think and act in an indefinable way called "Indian".[4] This becomes a crucial point to be considered in the curriculum plan.

The mass media has had two dramatic impacts upon Native persons. Firstly, the exposure to the fairyland of celluloid and tape with its orientation toward consumption has developed a desire for the material goods apparently readily available to all at rock bottom prices. Because material poverty is relative to the society which surrounds one, Native peoples, though statistically more affluent, are in fact poorer than a generation ago. Such poverty does not not necessarily develop aggressive action aimed at earning the material goods

but rather an intense bitterness that one is so deprived. Work harder, learn more and the world will be your oyster approach of schools is hardly inspiring to people who intuitively realize that everyone else in the race has a head start.

Secondly, the mass media has allowed Native persons to appreciate that their little community, band or tribe, is one of thousands throughout North America. A generation ago, one was a Cree and being Indian was a vague concept white people talked about. Now one is an Indian first and secondly a Cree. Indeed the new generation perceives Indians, Métis and Eskimos as Natives. A new pan-Indian concept is fast developing and has as its hero, Tecumseh. Schools and teachers cannot afford to ignore this new wave of nationalism which has fired the minds of Native youth.

These are the realities with which the teacher must struggle. The realities are not white realities. The mental set of the teacher will cause many of the Native realities to be intellectually rejected by the logic of the European oriented mind. Yet, the affective domain to a greater extent than previously realized, determines what cognitive learning will result. With these factors in mind there must be developed teaching methods and curricula which serve as alternatives to a system which failed largely because it refused to acknowledge that Native and white realities were often diametrically opposed. In short, it based its curricula not upon what the student was but upon what white society thought he should be.

Given that the realities of the situation are understood and their importance in the learning process appreciated, what then are the implications from the school curricula? If curriculum is defined as encompassing all learning opportunities provided by the school then the major concern must be with the curriculum plan which is the "advance arrangement of learning opportunities for a particular population of learners".[5]

In our curriculum materials we determined to have our arrangement of

learning experiences not directed at Indian and Métis children; not directed at white children, but simply at children in Canadian schools. We attempted to avoid any positive or negative bias but as objectively as possible we developed curriculum materials with an emphasis on native cultures as dynamic and ever-changing. We wished to examine the past in order to understand what was happening now. If we felt that certain elements of the past had little bearing on the present, as an elementary child would comprehend it, we simply omitted them.

Let me briefly illustrate this point from the music section of our curricula. The most common rhythm instrument of Native people of Western Canada was the drum. In the majority of communities the drum is no longer used except on those occasions when an effort is made to attract tourists or impress a visiting politician or anthropologist. Except in rare communities it has been replaced by the versatile guitar. Indeed, in our urban centers one can imagine the problems that would be caused in a high-rise apartment by the throb of drums in the small hours of the night.

The child can learn to appreciate the cultural change that occurs through migration to an urban setting by listening to and working with the following:

PLAY TAPE

or by listening to a group of modern instruments play the ancient Cree "Sugar Making Song".

PLAY TAPE

This music, by the way, was taped in a high-rise apartment in Winnipeg.

In a similar manner we can examine languages, Not a particular Indian or European language, but many languages. Curriculum materials can lead the teacher and pupils to investigate differences in languages. By creating a sense of wonder in a child's mind and then supplying materials to be investigated,

the student can be brought to understand how language differences develop different ways of thinking.

If a child learns that different cultures consider certain animals to be particularly wise or stupid will he be led to think about language in a new way?

> The Chinese say a man is "as wise as a rat".
> Many people in India say "as wise as a monkey".
> An Englishman says "as wise as an owl".
> A Cree Indian says "as wise as a mink".

The Cree happen to consider the owl as a particularly stupid bird. Even children can see how a Cree child feels when a teacher tells him he is as wise as an owl.

There is really no end to the way in which language can be used to create a sense of wonder in the minds of children and through such studies we can develop a sensitivity to and respect for all languages amongst young children.

Our curriculum kit is designed to lead children into investigating Indian and Métis peoples through materials relating to history, geography, archeology, language, arts and crafts, music, food, economics and mathematics. All of these studies try to be world-wide in terms of the principles to be developed but the specific content leads the student into the specifics of the Native cultures in Western Canada - Native cultures as they were in the past and as they are today in our urban centers.

Much is said today of developing amongst children an appreciation for and understanding of Native persons in Canada. Our view is that this appreciation and understanding cannot take place in a vacuum. It must be based upon knowledge which is gained by systematic study. This study can be made stimulating and challenging. For our purpose we felt that anthropology gave us the integrative framework needed.

The other disciplines we considered tended to be too rigid and narrow.

Who knows but that we may start a new trend. Economists speak of a Pan-European common market. Political Scientists study Pan-African movements while the latest history journals are filled with articles entitled Pan-American Unions.

Who knows, but if we use anthropology as an integrative framework we may develop school curricula that we can describe as Pan-Human.

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